BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

The Economy

- **British Columbians bought fewer cars, trucks and vans last year than in 1997.** There were 147,501 new vehicles sold in the province during 1998, down 10.3% from the 164,426 vehicles purchased in the province during 1997. Car sales were off 11.7%, while sales of trucks and vans dropped 9.2%. Canadian car dealers also felt the pinch during 1998, with relatively little sales growth (+0.3%), as Canadians held back on vehicle purchases after their buying spree in 1997 (when vehicle sales rose 18.2% nationally, and increased at double-digit rates in every province). Sales were up in five provinces, with dealers in Nova Scotia (+5.1%) putting in the best performance. PEI (-3.4), all three Prairie provinces, and BC saw sales fall below 1997 levels. Saskatchewan (-15.2%) recorded the largest decline. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Housing

- **The cost of new housing in BC continued to drop in December.** Victoria's New Housing Price Index (NHPI) fell to 77.6 (1992=100), a decline of 7.0% from the same month of 1997. In Vancouver, the NHPI was down 5.3%, to 85.7. Vancouver and Victoria were the only metropolitan areas to record significant declines in new house prices. Canadian prices were up 0.6%, led by a 6.8% advance in Calgary, and gains of 3.4% in Charlottetown and 3.3% in both Edmonton and Regina. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Housing starts in British Columbia slid to their lowest level since May 1985 in January.** In Vancouver, starts were down to 6,400 units, the lowest since October 1982. Starts had improved in December (increasing 9.2%, seasonally adjusted, over the November level), but sank 15.6% last month, resuming a downward trend that has seen starts fall at double-digit rates in three of the last four months. Starts were also weak in other parts of the country, declining in six provinces. New Brunswick (-44.0%) recorded the largest drop, followed by Alberta (-17.7%) and Saskatchewan (-10.5%). Nationally, housing starts fell 1.4%, as weakness in Ontario (-0.8%) and most of western Canada offset extremely strong performances in Manitoba (+122.2%) and two of the four Atlantic provinces, and an 8.8% gain in Quebec.
Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Household Spending

- **BC households spent an average of $53,618 on goods and services ranging from child care to travel to shelter costs during 1997.** Income taxes ($11,187), shelter costs ($11,168), transportation ($6,570) and food ($5,821) were the major expenditure items, accounting for almost two-thirds of household expenditures. British Columbians spent $3,298 on recreation, but just $269 on reading materials and other printed matter. Tobacco products and alcoholic beverages accounted for $1,234 of total household spending.

  Household expenditures in the province were above the national average ($49,947), but lower than in both Ontario ($55,328) and Alberta ($54,407). In all provinces except PEI and Nova Scotia, income taxes took the biggest bite out of household income, with shelter costs accounting for a slightly smaller share of the total budget. Canadians spent almost twice as much on income tax ($10,634) as on food ($5,703).
Source: Statistics Canada

Report **Men's participation rates continue to decline**

Did you know...
In 1991 and 1992, more than half of the Canadians accused of homicide had used alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident

Credit Unions and Co-operatives

- **British Columbia credit unions had a total membership of 1.4 million in 1998.** Credit union membership has become increasingly popular during the '90s, with membership rolls growing by 370,000. At the beginning of the decade, 33% of the province's residents belonged to a credit union. Last year, 36% of the population did some or all of their banking at a credit union. Despite the growth in membership, there are fewer credit unions operating in the province now than at the beginning of the decade. Credit unions have been joining forces, and the number of credit unions registered in the province has declined from 111 in 1990 to 86 last year.

  Source: Credit Union Central of BC data

- **Co-operatives are also experiencing a growth spurt.** Since 1990, the number of co-ops in the province has risen 35%. Housing co-operatives predominate, accounting for half (342) of the 679 co-operatives registered in the province last year. Among other types of co-operatives, service (137), production (73), marketing (58) and consumer (58) organizations are most common. Service (+69%), marketing (+61%) and production (+55%) co-operatives have made the greatest advances since the beginning of the decade. Consumer preferences for products offered by co-ops selling specialized equipment or clothing were a factor in the increase. The number of housing co-operatives has risen 20% during this period.

  Source: Ministry of Finance, Corporate Registries data

For-Hire Trucking

- **Canadian trucking carriers hauled more than 21 million tonnes of freight from BC and the territories to various destinations within Canada during 1997.** Almost all (18.1 million tonnes) of this freight was transported within the Pacific Region. The Prairies were the destination for 2.7 million tonnes of freight originating in BC.

  Source: SC, Catalogue 53-222-XPB

- **Nearly 168 million tonnes of freight were transported across the country by Canadian for-hire truckers in 1997.** Another 56 million tonnes were shipped to international destinations. Ontario generates just over a third (34%) of the country's domestic trucking activity, with almost 58 million tonnes of freight originating in that province. Relative to their size, the Prairie provinces are a powerhouse in the for-hire trucking industry, accounting for almost a quarter (23%) of the freight moved by domestic carriers. Quebec (21%) and BC (13%) are ranked third and fourth, while the Atlantic provinces are the origin for about 8% of domestic freight moved by for-hire truckers. About 80% of domestic trucking involves the movement of goods within a region.

  Source: SC, Catalogue 53-222-XPB

Police Personnel and Expenditures

- **There were 6,865 police officers working in the province in 1998, including 4,859 RCMP officers and 2,006 members of municipal police forces, giving BC 171 police officers for every 100,000 people living in the province.** Relative to its population, BC has fewer police officers than the Canadian average (181 per 100,000). Manitoba (195), NWT (354) and Yukon (374) are the most highly policed regions of the country, while Newfoundland (143) and PEI (149) have the smallest number of police officers compared to their population.

  The total bill for police activities in the province was $502 million, or $127 per capita, in 1997. BC spends less on policing services than most other parts of the country. The national average was $200 in 1997. *Source: SC, Catalogue 85F0019*

- **Among metropolitan areas, Thunder Bay (186 officers per 100,000 population) was the most highly policed city, followed by Winnipeg (182) and Saint John (175).** Victoria had 148 police officers for every 100,000 residents, while Vancouver weighed in at 146. Vancouver's crime rate (13,029 per 100,000 population) was the second highest of any metropolitan area (Regina, at 14,500, had the highest crime rate in Canada), but compared to its population, Vancouver had fewer police officers than 13 of the 25 metropolitan areas. Victoria's crime rate (11,434) was lower than Vancouver's, but it had more police officers relative to its population.

  Source: SC, Catalogue 85F0019

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

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Infoline Report:

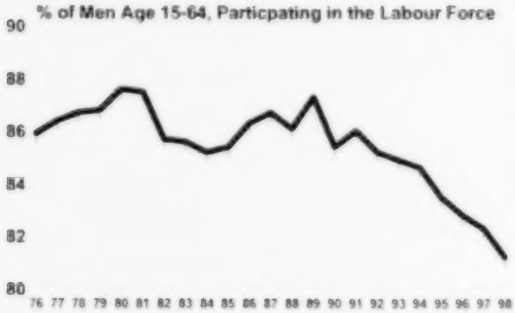
BC men – their participation in the labour market continues to decline

Contact: Anne Kittredge / (250) 387-0374

Originally published in October 1998 issue, *Earnings & Employment Trends*. Annual subscription: $60 + GST

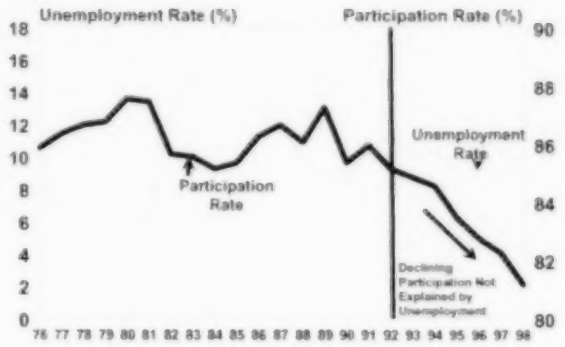
Since the early 1990's, a decreasing proportion of men are participating in the workforce. In 1991, 86 per cent of men, age 15–64, either had a job or were looking for one. Since then, that per cent has declined each year to the 1998 level of 81 per cent.

BC Men's Labour Market Participation is at its Lowest Level Since Data Were First Collected



Prior to 1992, the primary influence on whether or not men participated in the workforce was the availability of jobs. Specifically, when the unemployment rate increased, the participation rate would decline. Conversely, in times of declining unemployment, more men would enter the workforce.

High Unemployment Does Not Seem To Be the Cause of the Recent Decline in Participation Rates among Men



Since 1992, the availability of jobs is no longer the principal driving force of men's workforce attachment. Between 1992 and 1998, men's unemployment rate declined by more than 1 percentage point and yet it does not appear as though they responded to the increased job opportunities. Instead, their participation continued to drop.

What is causing the labour market participation decline among men? First, there is little evidence that the behavioural change is isolated to any specific age group.

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Men of All Ages Have Recorded a Decrease in their Labour Market Participation

All age groups have been impacted. The young, age 15-24, have seen the largest shift. Much of their changed labour market attachment is explained by a significant increase in school attendance. To what extent their increased school participation is due to a scarcity of jobs is difficult to quantify. Likely, that would partially explain the change, but not entirely – the youth unemployment rate was higher in the early 80's than currently and yet their workforce participation was close to 10 percentage points above what it is today.

Among older men, age 55–64, the participation rate of 60 per cent is the lowest (alongside the rate recorded in 1990), since the data series began. Early retirement is becoming more and more common and there is minimal evidence that this retirement is involuntary. Only a very small per cent of older men who are out of the workforce, claim they want a job.

The participation rate of prime-age males (25-54) has not fallen off as radically as their younger and older counterparts. It has been slowly ratcheting down from 95 per cent in the mid eighties to 91 per cent today. (All the sub age groups of the prime age male group, show similar patterns.) Unfortunately, time series data are not available on the activities of those not in the workforce but other data sources show upward trends in "stay-at-home Dads" and older full-time students. Hence, one can assume that today's proliferation of "working wives" is providing opportunities for males to pursue activities other than "work".

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Oct 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	4,021.3	0.9
Canada	30,381.1	0.9
GDP and INCOME		
(BC - at market prices)	1997	% change on one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	109,347	3.3
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	98,201	2.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	24,775	0.1
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	16,340	-2.3
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Nov	2,868	2.3
Merchandise Exports (raw) Nov	2,126	1.6
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Nov	2,724	-3.0
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		
(all items - 1992=100)	Dec '98	% change on one year ago
BC	109.7	0.3
Canada	108.7	1.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		
(seasonally adjusted)	Jan '99	% change on one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,096	4.2
Employed - BC	1,926	5.7
Unemployed - BC	170	-10.8
		Jan '98
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.1	9.5
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	7.8	8.8
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Feb 10/99	Feb 11/98
Prime Business Rate	6.75	6.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.40	6.40
- 5 year	6.90	6.85
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Feb 10/99	Feb 11/98
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4935	1.4365
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6696	0.6961
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Nov '98	% change on one year ago
BC	622.69	1.8
Canada	606.40	1.1

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

Statistics Workshop

The preceding page identifies a survey workshop offered by Statistics Canada. The course will take place in Victoria over three days from February 17 to 19. A few seats remain available.

The course should be of interest to those intending to conduct and analyze their own survey as well as to those who may be contracting out survey work.

Released this week by BC STATS

- Labour Force Statistics, January 1999

Next week

- Consumer Price Index, January 1999
- Quarterly Regional Statistics, 4th Quarter 1998

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